Council Highlights: June, 1999

Historic college-university degree-completion accord signed

May 6, 1999 marked the official signing of the Ontario College-University Degree-Completion Accord. The accord, which was signed at a ceremony held at the Ministry of Education and Training (MET), enhances opportunities for college diploma graduates to earn degrees from Ontario universities. Robert Prichard, President of the University of Toronto, and Gary Polonsky, President of Durham College, signed the accord on behalf of the universities and colleges, respectively. Deputy Minister Veronica Lacey witnessed the signing.

The accord sets out a series of principles for developing degree-completion arrangements between colleges and universities. It also provides a matrix to guide the creation of degree-completion agreements and degree programs. Universities and colleges will work together voluntarily within the framework of the accord, with each agreement requiring approval by the relevant governing bodies of the institutions.

The accord was developed by the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC), co-chaired by Dr. David Atkinson, President of Brock University, and Gary Polonsky. It was subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO).

Waterloo's incoming president speaks to IT business community

On May 26, 1999, the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and ITAC Ontario co-hosted a breakfast briefing in Toronto that featured Dr. David Johnston, incoming President of the University of Waterloo. Dr. Johnston, one of Canada's leading IT and education experts, addressed the ways in which universities are responding to current demands of the labour market and industry exigencies. Between 65 and 70 key representatives from the IT business community, the Ministry of Education and Training and the universities attended the event.

Graduation, OSAP default and employment rates now available

Ontario university graduates are doing exceptionally well in today's job market according to the results of a recent survey. The overall employment rate was 96.7% for 1996 graduates of undergraduate degree programs, two years after graduation, with rates consistently high across all program areas: social sciences and humanities each at 96.1%; law at 95.8%; business at 97.7%; and nursing at 98.9%.

In May, all Ontario universities made these results about their institution, as well as graduation and OSAP default rates for 1998-99, available on their respective web sites. The results, which were collected by the COU-MET Steering Committee, are intended to help prospective students who are considering their postsecondary options for next fall. Graduation and default rates were calculated by MET using existing data sources, while employment information was collected through a graduate survey conducted by the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (see February's *Council Highlights).*

Next on the agenda for the COU-MET Steering Committee is a review of 1998-99 activities and the subsequent issues that arose during the pilot year. The committee recently contacted each institution for comments.

Survey finds Ontario residents favour increasing university operating grants

A recent survey concluded: "Ontario residents [87%] are overwhelmingly in favour of the Ontario government increasing operating grants to universities to bring the province's per capita contribution up to the national average. This opinion is shared by all political and demographic subgroups alike." The COMPAS survey was commissioned by the Friends of Ontario Universities, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance.

Efforts continue to advance teacher education programs

The Working Group on Teacher Education, chaired by Dr. David Turpin, Vice-President, Academic, Queen's University, recently submitted its report on enhancing the quality and innovation of teacher education programs to the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) for consideration.

In a memorandum dated May 14, 1999, Deputy Minster Veronica Lacey announced that the government will provide $3.75 million in 1999-2000 to increase enrolment in consecutive teacher education programs by a minimum of 500 spaces through a strategic corridor adjustment to individual institutions with education programs. The focus of the expanded spaces will be the areas experiencing the most significant teacher shortages: mathematics, science, technological studies, French and special education. The additional funding will be provided annually for at least four years. In 2001-2002, MET will undertake a review to assess the ongoing need for additional graduates in light of teacher demand.

Secondary school validation process: progress report

Over the past months, faculty representing all of COU's member institutions have been taking part in a review of the proposed new curriculum for grades 11 and 12. Throughout May, members of the subject committees, representing the views of their colleagues, have been meeting with their college counterparts and Ministry of Education and Training staff to make recommendations to the Ministry about the content of the new university and university-college courses. By the time these meetings are concluded, the subject committees will likely be able to provide either endorsement or detailed feedback about changes needed to the proposed courses if these courses are meant to provide appropriate preparation for university-level study.

The endorsement of a course serves as a recommendation to Ontario universities that the course is deemed acceptable for admission purposes. If the committees are not able to endorse a course and recommend major revisions, the course will be rewritten and the altered version will be brought back to the committee for further review.

Executive Director of OCGS leaves post in June

Dr. Nicole Bégin-Heick, Executive Director of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS), will be leaving COU on June 30, 1999.

Among her exceptional contributions to Council over the past five years, Dr. Bégin-Heick has helped to refocus the appraisal process to place greater emphasis on the students' educational experience; successfully concluded a Master Agreement for Ontario Universities with the Council of Science and Technology of Mexico (CONACyT) to attract CONACyT scholarship-holders to study in Ontario universities; assumed responsibility for the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR); and established the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Process, under the auspices of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV).

Under Dr. Bégin-Heick's expert guidance, COU has continued to be a leader in the area of quality assurance in education in Canada. She has chosen to return to Ottawa to pursue a career in

consulting.

Two new appointments at the COU Secretariat

Dr. David Leyton-Brown will join the COU Secretariat as Executive Director of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS), effective July 1, 1999.

Dr. Leyton-Brown is a distinguished scholar and administrator who is committed to graduate education and, as such, is well suited to overseeing the continuing evolution of the graduate appraisals process. In his new capacity at COU, he will also provide advice to Council on research developments, priorities and funding.

Dr. Leyton-Brown is currently Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and a professor of political science at York University. He is the author of *Weathering the Storm: Canadian-U.S. Relations, 1980-1983* and many other publications on Canada-U.S. relations, Canadian and U.S. foreign policies, and the politics of international trade and investment. He serves as Chair of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies and played a major role in the recent review of the graduate appraisals process. He is also President of the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools. Dr. Leyton-Brown holds a bachelor's degree from McGill University and a master's and doctorate from Harvard University.

He replaces Dr. Nicole Bégin-Heick who will leave her position on June 30, 1999.

Dr. Anthony (Tony) Vander Voet will be joining COU on a six-month secondment from the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology, effective June 1, 1999.

Dr. Vander Voet, who brings a wealth of public sector experience to COU, will strengthen the Council's efforts in developing a strong working relationship with government in the research area, and in developing plans and priorities for research development and funding. He will also help to support the activities of the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR) and its affiliate group, Vice-Presidents (Research).

In his current position as Manager of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund Secretariat, Dr. Vander Voet has been responsible for implementing and administering the Challenge Fund, a 10-year, $500-million program supporting industrially relevant R&D at Ontario universities.

His career includes former positions with various ministries as well as a teaching post at Erindale College and consulting in a number of foreign countries. He holds a BSc and MSc in chemistry from the University of Alberta and a PhD in chemistry from the University of Toronto.

Symposium on auto parts sector underway

The Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and the Auto Parts Manufacturing Association (APMA) are co-sponsoring an Auto Parts Sector Symposium. The symposium, which will be co-chaired by Dr. Ross Paul, President of the University of Windsor, and Ken Nichol, CEO of Ventra Group, is designed to bring together key representatives of industry and universities to discuss curricula and training issues that affect the auto parts sector. The symposium, the second sectoral symposium organized by OPAS, is a response to recommendations made by the Task Force on Labour Market Issues to increase dialogue and develop closer working relations between industry and academia.

Proceedings on biotechnology symposium released

The Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and the Biotechnology Human Resource Council (BHRC) have just released a report entitled *Biotechnology Symposium Proceedings*. The report documents the discussions and findings of a one-day forum held early this year between the biotechnology sector and universities. The symposium, which was jointly sponsored by OPAS and BHRC and co-chaired by Dr. Bill Leggett, Principal of Queen's University, and Graham Strachan, CEO of Allelix Biopharmaceuticals, examined three issues affecting biotechnology: research, curriculum development and workforce training. For a copy of the report, please call OPAS at (416) 979-2165 ext. 259.

May issue of *For the Record*

COU recently published its fourth issue of *For the Record (Vol. 2 No. 2)*. In this issue, the COU newsletter features a timely recap of the higher education highlights within the 1999 Ontario budget; covers the release of the *Ontario's Students, Ontario's Future*, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Angus Reid reports; and summarizes where the three main political parties stand on higher education. To request a copy, contact COU at (416) 979-2165 ext. 236 or by e-mail at lsanson@coupo.cou.on.ca.

Future directions for the Working Group on STEP

The Working Group on the STudent Equivalency Program (STEP), chaired by Dr. David Marshall, President of Nipissing University, presented its report to Council at its meeting on May 27, 1999. The majority of the institutions present at the meeting were in a position to commit to furnishing the database with first-year equivalencies by September 2000.